

ISP – INDIVIDUAL SERVICE PLAN

The ISP (Individual Service Plan) is a plan that is created by a team, which includes, but is not limited to: the age-appropriate child, the child's parents, the child's caseworker, and the foster parents (when child is in out-of-home care). School teachers, therapists and other providers of services to children and their families are also important to the decision making process and should be invited to the ISP meeting. It is tailored to the circumstances and needs of the particular child. It also takes into consideration the needs of our foster parent partners. Actually it is a plan for the delivery of services to children and families served by DHR as well as delivery of services to foster parents who are providing care for children. . The ISP is a process-driven document that undergoes changes as the needs of the child change. The social worker will discuss this plan with the foster parents. The goal is for all decisions to be made in the ISP process. If Foster parents need training on the ISP process they can request it of their local DHR or licensing agency.

FAQ ABOUT ISP'S

- 1. Is it appropriate to remove foster parents from the ISP planning process?** *ISP policy, page 3, states that "The right of class members, parents and foster parents to participate in treatment planning and delivery may be restricted only according to a specified administrative process." This process has not yet been developed. However, in situations where safety is an issue or where an individual is impeding the planning process, not just differing with the plan, or is placing others at risk, it would seem to be appropriate to ask that individual to leave. This might be the foster parent, the parent, a child, the attorney or others. But generally speaking, it is inappropriate to ask the foster parent to leave during the ISP meeting.*
- 2. Who is required to participate in the ISP and what do these participants do?** *Page 13 of ISP policy states, "The child and family planning team, also known as the ISP team, works in partnership to develop, review and revise ISP's. The team is responsible for identifying strengths and needs; establishing goals; matching steps and services to needs; monitoring service delivery; and evaluating the ISP's effectiveness".*
"Team composition shall include, at a minimum, the age-appropriate child(ren), the parent(s), the DHR worker, the foster care provider (for children in out-of-home care), and other individuals requested by the child(ren) or family. It may also include relatives, other past or present caregivers, service providers, teachers and other DHR program staff involved with the family. Teachers, in particular, should be involved or should provide input when the child is having problems related to school work, behavior in school, etc.
- 3. What if the ISP that I receive is different from what was discussed in the meeting?** *Pages 17 – 18 of ISP policy, states that it is a team member's responsibility "to review the ISP upon receipt and bring to the DHR worker's attention any discrepancy they may note or confusion they may have regarding the written plan." This may happen after a supervisory review of a case where the supervisor did not attend but finds that pertinent information is missing. This may simply require clarification through a telephone call with a member or a letter to a member or may require that all team members meet to resolve the issue.*
- 4. What if I am not happy with the result of the ISP meeting?** *Page 17 of the ISP policy addresses the problem of members not being able to reach consensus. If you are the only team member who does not agree with the plan, it may mean that you need to consider if the outcome that you desire for the family and child(ren) is different from the outcomes established by the team. Certainly the focus of any plan for the child should consider the child(ren)'s "best interest". You may want to address your concerns with other team members or with the DHR social worker. It is important that the information that is shared in the meeting be kept confidential. It would be inappropriate to go outside the meeting to discuss your concerns, except as defined in the Conflict Resolution.*
- 5. How should I be notified of the ISP meeting?** *Page 16 of ISP Policy states that "written notification is required for parents, foster parents, preadoptive parents and relative caregivers. The remaining team members may receive either verbal or written notification."*
- 6. Who should notify me?** *Page 16 of ISP Policy states that "The initial meeting of the child and family planning team will be arranged by the DHR worker in partnership with the child(ren) and family. Subsequent team meetings are normally convened by the worker, but may be convened by any team member with proper notification to the remaining team members." As a foster parent, you should receive written notification from the agency. The worker, supervisor or another person with DHR may mail this notice to you. In emergency situations where there is no time to send out a letter, the worker, supervisor or another DHR person might*

provide notice to you by telephone. Except in emergency situations, however, “sufficient advance notice of the date, time and location of each ISP meeting shall be provided to all team members to allow them to prepare for and participate in the meetings.”

7. **Who can convene an ISP meeting?** Again, page 16 of ISP Policy, as indicated above, states that the DHR worker will arrange the initial meeting... “Subsequent team meetings are normally convened by the worker, but may be convened by any team member with proper notification to the remaining team members.
8. **Where and when should ISP meetings be held?** “Meetings will be conducted at any mutually agreeable and accessible location that maximizes the family’s opportunity for participation.” And certainly, the time should be at a time convenient to ensure full participation. Meetings can be held after hours and on weekends.
9. **What information should I as a foster parent bring to the meeting?** This is a part of the planning process for the ISP meeting that is to be handled by the DHR worker. The worker should provide to you in a pre-ISP contact just what information you would be expected to provide during the initial ISP meeting. For future meetings, you should know the expectations of you through the ISP document. Further, if you have information that is unknown to the DHR worker related to educational needs, behavioral issues, etc. you should be prepared to discuss this. Examples of appropriate information to share: needs of the children; how the child is doing; what extra expenses are being incurred in providing care for the child, what extracurricular activities the child is involved in; child behaviors; school status, etc.
10. **What is my role as a foster parent in the ISP?** Your role to the ISP is as a member of the team who develops the plan for the child and family. Your knowledge of the child, based on the fact that you provide care for the child 24 hours per day seven days per week, is critical to the planning process. Information related to the child such as educational issues, physical/emotional health, and relationship with his family, the child’s concerns, and the child’s feelings are important to the development of a plan that addresses the needs of the child. You should strongly advocate for any services needed by the child and his family that are necessary to meet the identified needs for the child and their family. You should work to ensure that these needs and the services are clearly listed in the ISP along with funding sources to be sure that the costs associated with the service will be covered. You should also advocate for any services that you might need to help you provide the best care for the child in your home. These services should also be listed in the ISP along with the funding source.
11. **What if I am called into an ISP and it turns into something else?** As a team member, you must call this to the attention of the person facilitating the ISP. An ISP meeting is a time for planning for the child(ren) and family.
12. **What is required of a DHR worker in planning for an ISP?** The worker for the case should review all information that is available in the case file including existing documentation, any psychological evaluations on family members, documentation/progress notes from other providers such as schools, therapists, in-home services, court orders, educational information, etc. The worker should plan to get any information that is missing from the file and should initiate a thorough assessment of the case prior to the 30-day review of the ISP. The worker should also list any questions left unanswered and should begin a list of strengths/needs based on the information that exists. The worker then should make contact with the family and child to discuss the meeting and expectations of the meeting engaging family members around issues that must be addressed. The worker should also work with them to identify and prioritize needs and underlying conditions and should work with them on establishing goals. The worker should also contact other team members to discuss the meeting and expectations and discuss roles and responsibilities. The worker should send notices as appropriate. The worker should bring to the ISP planning table knowledge from the review of records and contact with the family, child, and other parties that are pertinent to the ISP meeting to facilitate the planning process.
13. **Can the foster parent liaison sit in an ISP with me to help me express my concerns?** If it is explained to the parents about the role and purpose of the liaison’s involvement, and the parents have no objection to the participation of another foster parent, then the liaison or other foster parent participation is permitted. In some situations, the foster parent to the child has opted not to sit in on an ISP for safety reasons for the foster parents, and another foster parent has been allowed to sit in place of the foster parent with permission from SDHR. The local DHR agency should, in most situations, be able to convince the parent that the liaison is there solely to provide assistance.
14. **What are the timelines for ISP’s?**
 - The initial ISP should be completed within 30 days after it is decided that a case is opened for service (protective services).

- *An ISP should be held prior to the removal of a child from his home, but no less than 72 hours after removal.*
- *The ISP should be reviewed within 30 days from the date of the initial ISP.*
- *An ISP should be held as necessary based on family situational changes, but at least every six months from the initial ISP.*
- *An ISP should be written up and distributed within 10 working days after the ISP meeting.*

15. Who is in charge of the ISP meeting? *The ISP meeting is a DHR function, but the meeting is a team planning meeting. Typically the leader of the ISP will be the DHR worker; however, there is nothing wrong with other team members serving in some of the roles at the meeting. There are three separate roles related to the meeting itself and some ISP's will have team members filling each of the roles while in other ISP's a team member may fill more than one role. The roles are facilitator, worker and recorder. Facilitators have three major responsibilities which include building the team, directing the process and facilitating differences. The DHR supervisor may also participate in the ISP in filling one of the roles depending on the experience level of the DHR worker.*

16. What if the ISP meeting is canceled? *The ISP should only be canceled if the family is unable to make the meeting. The Department has certain time limits for ISP's and timeliness of ISP's is monitored through QA reports and conversion status reports. The worker should never cancel the meeting because the worker does not have time for the meeting.*

17. What are segmented ISP's? *Pages 16 – 17 of ISP policy defines segmenting as “bringing some of the team members together for a meeting, rather than assembling the entire time.” This is not preferred but may be necessary, such as when a case involves several children in different types of placement where all team members may not be necessary for planning for an individual child or where the child has individual educational needs and the teacher is unable to attend the scheduled ISP.*

18. What role does an attorney play in an ISP? *It is becoming more and more prevalent that attorneys, especially the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) for the child, is present for the ISP. The GAL's role is to be sure that the issues that are keeping a child from being returned home are addressed, to assure that safety of the child is addressed, to assist as a team member in monitoring the accomplishments of the steps, to participate in the planning, modification, deletion or addition of steps, goals, etc., to assist in identifying the needs of the child and to ensure that the child's needs are being met.*

The role of the parents' attorney is to protect parental rights. In situations where criminal charges are pending against parents, the attorney for the parents would see his role to be sure that the case is not compromised.

The ISP is a DHR function. This is not a legal meeting and is not to be used for discovery purposes. Some judges in some counties have adopted the position in a court order that any information presented in an ISP is not admissible in court as a part of discovery.

In any ISP meeting any party, including an attorney, who is impeding the work of the team should be asked to leave the meeting. However, the fact that a member of the team, including an attorney, disagrees with the decision of the team does not necessarily mean that he is “impeding the work of the team”. DHR offices also need to be aware of the Judges' view on the attorneys attending the meetings. They may have to, in some counties, ask the Judge to help resolve problems that may exist. No attorney who is participating in this meeting carries any more weight than another member of the team and team members should not be hindered in working toward suitable outcomes for children. Unfortunately in some situations, attorneys are seemingly in control of the ISP, and this should be addressed in the next rewrite of ISP policy.

19. Can the ISP meeting be taped? *This would be conditional on the purpose of the taping and upon all parties to the ISP agreeing on the taping. However, as a general rule, because of the confidentiality issue, taping would not be allowed. The main reason that it might happen is if the DHR worker wants to be sure that all of the permanency plan, goals, and steps are included in the ISP document. However, taping tends to create an atmosphere of litigation and this meeting is not intended to be used for that purpose. Any taping can only be done if all parties sign the confidentiality agreement as per ISP policy.*

20. What is the purpose of the ISP? *Page 1 of the ISP policy states that “The ISP, developed in partnership with the child and family planning team, is the actual case plan that is designed to achieve the desired case outcome. It is intended to develop a treatment plan for the child and his family. It also serves as an organizer of case activity and a tool for communicating with the individuals involved with the child(ren) and family. GAL policy states that, “The ISP is the case plan that results from a process that includes the following elements: engaging and joining with the family; identifying strengths, needs and goals; facilitating a child and family planning meeting; matching and developing services and steps; determining who will take the*

lead responsibility for specific steps in the plan; tracking progress and responding to new concerns, and sustaining the change. The plan becomes a blueprint or roadmap for change. The plan formalizes agreements among the parents and members of the team about who will be responsible for doing aspects of the plan and when they will be done. An effective ISP will organize hope for a family for a different future and will provide the direction to initiate and sustain change.” This meeting is not a place to “air dirty laundry”, or argue over payments, etc. and it is the responsibility of the facilitator to be sure that the meeting fulfills the purpose of planning for positive outcomes for the child and family.

Reference:

Individualized Service Planning Policy – also available on the AFAPA website.